

FROM YOUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS

Updates from Cornwall Archaeological Society's Area Representatives

Any opinions or errors in these articles are those of the authors and must not be assumed to be those of Cornwall Archaeological Society.

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Issue 63

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QUOIT PUZZLING

In a follow-up to his article in last month's edition (*SAVING ZENNOR QUOIT – OR WHO NEEDS HISTORIC ENGLAND?*), Adrian Rodda has been, ahem, drilling down into attempts in modern times to make use of Zennor Quoit (HER 36098; Scheduled Monument CO33; SW 4687 3801; Zennor parish):

Back to the vandalism at Zennor Quoit.

In last month's issue I explained why I thought the drill holes on the front of the wing of the portal dolmen were not related to the uprights that were apparently supports for the cowshed that the farmer was bribed by Rev Borlase to build against the hedge and not against the side of the quoit. If this was to be confirmed there might be evidence that they pre-dated the drill holes on the south support of the quoit.



The supports of the cowshed built against the hedge by a farmer in 1861. Photo: Adrian Rodda.



The drill holes in the south support of Zennor quoit. Photo: Adrian Rodda.

Penlee House Gallery and Museum, Penzance, has a collection of scale models of quoits presented to the Penzance Natural History and Antiquarian Society, founded 1839. The modellers were Miss Louisa and Miss Matilda Millet. They gifted their model of Zennor Quoit in 1848. It is made of clay, stone dust and papier-mâché. All the models are very accurate as far as I can see. The museum very kindly sent me photographs of the quoit from their archive. The one below clearly shows the drill holes on the wing of the portal.



Picture courtesy of Penlee Art Gallery and Museum, Penzance.

Therefore, the drill holes were made by 1848, while the farmer's attempt to build a cowshed was dated to 1861. No wonder the drilled moor stone supports in the hedge did not appear to have been split from the portal wing. I wonder what happened to the stone that was removed from the wing? It would be good to know how high that wing was.

Now we have to look for confirmation of the drill holes in the south support. Unfortunately, the museum did not have a photograph of that part of the quoit, but kindly allowed me to use my own photograph taken through the glass. (Photography is not allowed in the museum or art gallery.)



The south support of Zennor Quoit as it appeared in 1848. Photo Adrian Rodda. Courtesy of Penlee House Art Gallery and Museum Penzance.

It is clear that there are no drill holes in the support stone. However, I am puzzled by the gashes in the slipped capstone. They are not obvious now. (See above.) This may question the accuracy of the model. If we accept that it is accurate, the drill holes are post 1848, plausibly 1861 and represent the farmer's attempt to build his cowshed using the south wing and south support as his walls.

It is also interesting to note that the model of Chun Quoit does not show the deep drill hole in its capstone. Evidence that it too was made after 1848?

Penlee House Art Gallery and Museum is well worth a visit. It has recently acquired the huge Hayle hoard of Roman coins and shows them spilling from a replica of the metal jug that contained them. It is situated in Penlee Gardens and has an appetising restaurant. The adjacent car park is probably the cheapest in Penzance. What more incentive do you need to come far west and view the display which takes you through the prehistory of Penwith with some of its key finds on display?

Text by Adrian Rodda. Photographs from Adrian Rodda and Penlee House Art Gallery and Museum.

Information about Penlee House Art Gallery and Museum, including opening hours, can be found at: <https://www.penleehouse.org.uk/> .

SHIVER ME TIMBERS

A stroll along a tide-washed beach under a blue winter sky is always refreshing but to find what appears to be a long-forgotten shipwreck poking from the sand just adds to the magic. This is what happened to Dr Judith Toms, an archaeologist originally from Lelant, but back in Cornwall for a visit. The timbers were found on Kidney Sands, Lelant.

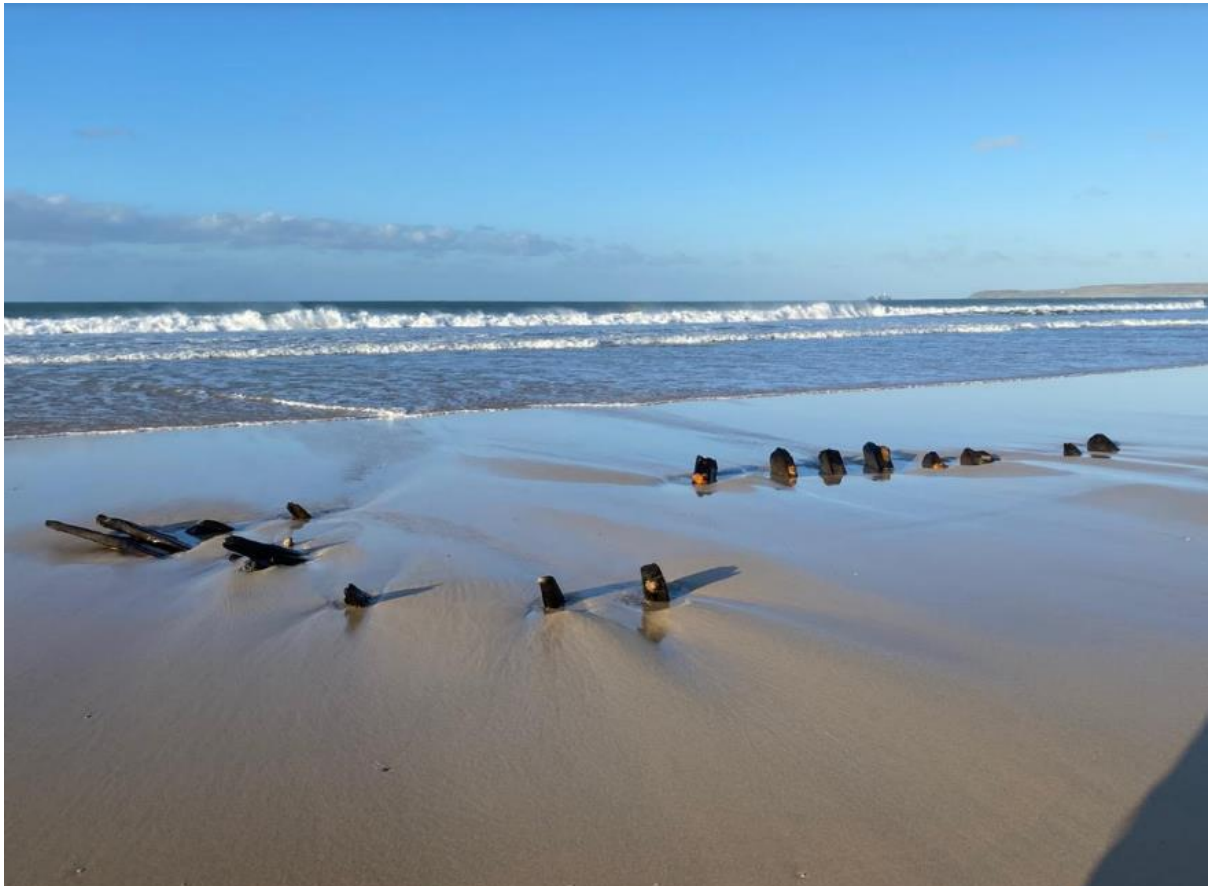


Photo: Dr Judith Toms

Dr Toms got in touch with the CAS Area Reps at arearep@cornisharchaeology.org.uk and gave this information:

This afternoon we found what look like remains of timbers from a smallish boat which had been exposed at low tide on Kidney Sands at Lelant. We wondered whether this storm's having never seen it before... I took some photos and made a rough measurement of the site. Some of the timbers have manmade holes and heavily rusted iron, presumably nails.

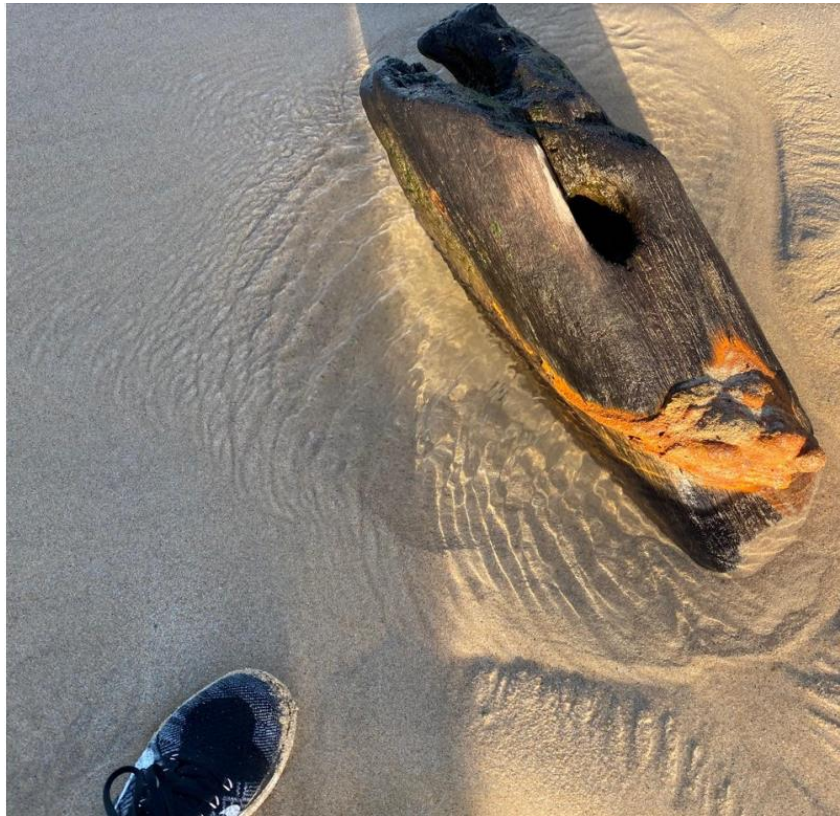


Photo: Dr Judith Toms



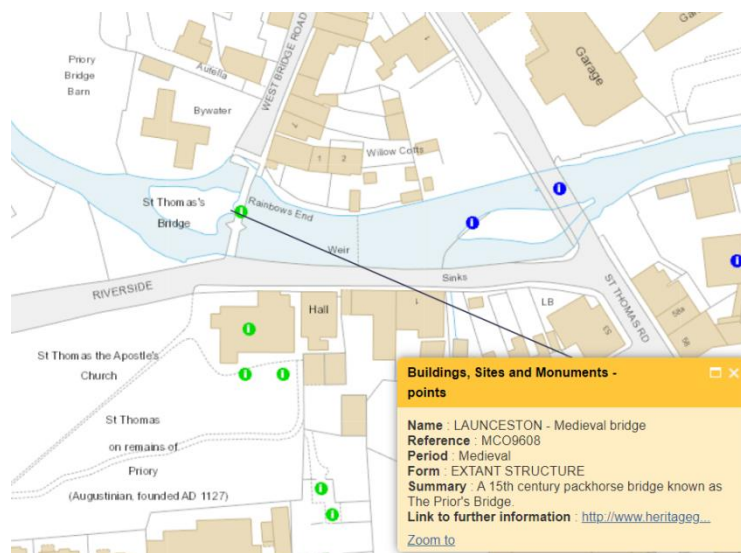
Photo: Dr Judith Toms

One of the many strengths of Cornwall Archaeological Society is the wealth of expertise and useful connections that it contains. Soon after the initial enquiry, Laura Ratcliffe-Warren, Ancient Penwith Officer and CAS trustee, was able to find someone with information about the wreck. Melanie Frankell had previously looked into this and suggested it was the remains of SV [Sailing Vessel] Albert Wilhelm. According to a report from ITV (<https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2021-01-11/victorian-shipwreck-revealed-by-winter-storms-in-cornwall>): *'Built in 1856, the German brigantine Albert Wilhelm was sailing from the Isle of Man to Fowey when it struck Stones Reef off Godrevy on 16 October 1886. With the hull leaking, the Albert Wilhelm made it to Porth Kidney Sands where it ran aground. Hayle's first ever lifeboat, Isis, was launched, and all of the crew of the Albert Wilhelm were rescued. The crew apparently remained on Porthkidney beach that night, only to see another ship beached right next to theirs the following morning. The Albert Wilhelm was eventually broken up and taken away, with only part of the hull left in the sands.'*

As stormy weather increases, as part of the accelerating climate crisis, who know what else will be revealed around our coast?

‘CURIOUS AND INTERESTING’

‘Curious and interesting’ is the description of St Thomas’s Bridge in Launceston given by Charles Henderson in his *Old Cornish Bridges and Streams* (1928, reprinted by D. Bradford Barton Ltd, Truro, in 1972). Otherwise known as the Prior’s Bridge or the West Bridge, it was, according to Heritage Gateway: *‘built in the C15 to link the Priory with the town of Newport. It is a fine example of a medieval packhorse bridge, and is rag-stone built, with five low arches of Polyphant stone, with broad cut-waters between them. There is no parapet, and the roadway has a cobbled surface 2m wide with copings of granite. The heavy iron guard-rails along the side may be C18 ... It is a Listed Building grade I ... Alongside the bridge is a wide, paved ford.’*



Henderson gives a succinct history of this lovely structure (HER 2612; Listed Building (I) 370137; SX 3278 8509; Launceston parish):

'When the town of Launceston first grew up around the Monastery of St Stephen, there were probably no houses on Dunheved, the site of the present Launceston. Old Launceston is now St Stephens. After the Conquest, the Norman Earls of Cornwall, seeing the strategic importance of Dunheved, made it their chief Castle and obliged the Canons of St Stephen to move their Monastery to a new site near the ford of the Kensey under Dunheved. Here in the green meadows arose the noble buildings of the richest Monastery in Cornwall. The servants and townsmen followed the canons and established themselves in Newport with only the Kensey between them and their Monastery. The bridge that was built to link the Canons to their tenants still remains one of the most curious and interesting in Cornwall with the old ford by its side. It is usually called St. Thomas Bridge from the proximity of St. Thomas Church, and consists of 5 little arches, now very low by reason of the deep mud, with broad cutwaters between them. There is no parapet; indeed the little paved roadway 4 feet in width would not allow of one. It is fortunate that an 18th century bridge built a short distance down the stream has saved this fascinating old bridge from destruction.'

The bridge may have been saved from destruction but recently Peter Crispin noted local concerns that it was in need of proper repair. Sara Fell Hicks expressed her worries about its deterioration on the *Launceston Then* Facebook page (well worth a look for its own sake), noting that flagstones seemed to have been pushed into the river. Diana Sutherland, the CAS Area Rep, has repeatedly drawn attention to the condition of the bridge over many years.

Sara has kindly given permission for some of her Facebook photos to be used here.



Photo: Sara Fell Hicks



Photo: Sara Fell Hicks



Photos: Sara Fell Hicks



Photo: Sara Fell Hicks



Photo: Sara Fell Hicks

But there is good news. Diana contacted the Town Council and was given an update on the situation. Cormac has detailed plans for repairs, including raking out and repointing the cobbles and walls, re-fixing the slate coping stones and carrying out protection work on the foundations. Repairs to the structure, which is on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register, can't be done between 30th September and 31st May because the River Kensey is designated as a salmonid river by the Environment Agency. Happily, this 'curious and interesting' bridge will be repaired soon.

A WINTER'S TALE

This winter a group of hardened volunteers, mainly from CAS, have been carrying out a very successful programme of scrub-bashing at three important sites in Mid Cornwall:

Castilly Henge (HER 21217; Scheduled Monument CO110; SX 0311 6274; Luxulyan parish)

Helman Tor (HER 21396.10; Scheduled Monument CO991; SX 0619 6168; Lanlivery parish)

Penadlake (or Braddock Down) Barrows (including HER 71497; SX 1440 6333; Broadoak parish)

This was part of a Scheduled Monument Management programme being led by Pete Dudley of Cornwall Archaeological Unit, in conjunction with Ann Preston-Jones of Historic England.



The ditch at Castilly Henge had been choked with vegetation but is now clear. Photo: Ann Preston-Jones.



Clearance at Castilly has allowed Historic England surveyors to undertake a survey of this important Neolithic monument. Photo: Ann Preston-Jones.



Gorse being removed from one of the barrows near Penadlake. Photo: Ann Preston-Jones



Brian Oldham busy at work. Photo: Ann Preston-Jones



Much of the gorse was burnt under careful supervision. Photo: Ann Preston-Jones



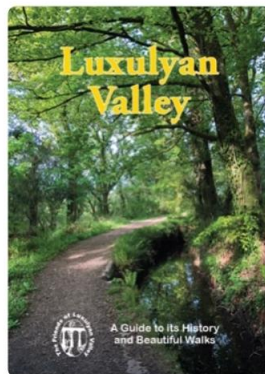
Once the gorse was removed it was possible to see how impressive these barrows still are. Photo: Ann Preston-Jones



This group of barrows still stands out on the skyline. Photo: Ann Preston-Jones.

LUXULYAN VALLEY GUIDEBOOK

Luxulyan Valley is part of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site. It is much loved for its beauty and its unique industrial remains. A new guidebook has just been published, thanks to the hard work of the Friends of Luxulyan Valley and Cornwall Council. Modestly priced at £5, it is beautifully designed and packed with information:



The long-awaited Friends of Luxulyan Valley's 64-page souvenir guide to the Valley is now available to buy. Our new edition includes an A4 colour map of the area and is packed with photographs old and new in full colour throughout. The story charts the history of the Valley from Medieval times to its zenith during the Age of Enlightenment, when the ingenuity and ambition of one man created an industrial powerhouse, the remaining structures and landscape of which has earned the its Valley World Heritage status.

Today the Valley has mostly been reclaimed by nature, a beautiful haven for wildlife and perhaps one of Cornwall's best kept secrets. Our guide provides information on common flora and fauna that might be seen when visiting, and there are numerous recommended walks to help readers discover the many historic and natural wonders of the Valley for themselves.

We are grateful to all those Friends who contributed much time and effort in writing and producing this guide and to Cornwall Council, for funding and for sharing their expertise about this World Heritage Site.

All proceeds from the sale of guidebooks goes to fund the activities of the Friends of Luxulyan Valley.

Details on how to buy it are available at:

<https://www.luxulyanvalley.co.uk/shop/guidebook/> . All proceeds go to the Friends of Luxulyan Valley to help them preserve and maintain this lovely valley.



Attractive picnic benches have been installed in Luxulyan Valley by Cornwall Council as part of its strategy to make it more accessible. However, great care has been taken to retain its character as a place to escape the busy world!

Area Representatives would love to hear from fellow CAS members, and the general public, about any feature of the historic environment in their parishes, whether a new discovery, something causing concern, or even just to answer queries. If you have any concerns, or new information, about any archaeological feature, please contact the Area Representative for the parish. If you do not know who that is, just look at the inside back cover of the latest journal, *Cornish Archaeology* 58, or send an email to arearep@cornisharchaeology.org.uk.

Roger Smith, 19th March 2022

